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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, March 1, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Checking the Clothes Moth." Information from the Bureau of Entomology,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Talk about the busy little bee -- sometimes I think he's a loafer compared to the ravaging little clothes moth. Time was when we didn't have to worry much about moths during the winter. The cold weather cut down their activities. But in these days of steam-heated houses, their appetites never fail, winter or summer, and they never go on a hunger strike. As long as they're comfortably warm and undisturbed, as long as they have wool or feather or fur or even hair fabric on the menu, and as long as they have a dark, secluded spot to dine in, they'll make life one grand continuous meal.

Your best suit or knitted sports dress or handsome guest-room blankets -- these may be proud possessions to you, but to Mr. and Mrs. Moth and all their wormy chewing children, they're nothing but a meal ticket. That reminds me of the story of the moth who boasted of his success as a golf architect. "Why a golf architect?" someone asked him. "Because," he explained, "I've just laid out eighteen holes in a woolen blanket."

Unless we want our blankets, clothes, rugs and upholstered furniture used to fatten contented moths, we have to be eternally vigilant, even in the dead of winter. Cleanliness and proper storage are the two best means of preventing moth damage at any time of year.

We all know from experience that moths won't attack clothing in daily use which is exposed to sunlight and air. But the once-in-a-while clothes are the ones that may suffer unless we check up on them frequently. The golf sweater or light-weight coat hanging in the spare-room closet and rarely used, or the golf hose shut up in the bureau drawer and worn only a few times a season -- you may find these hopelessly damaged when you go to look for them some day. Those hungry little moths may have discovered these tempting morsels and have had a feast, all undisturbed. Parts of rugs lying under furniture often are subject to attack. This location is also quiet, dark and undisturbed, with plenty of food to nibble on. And upholstered furniture -- my, what a happy home that has made for thousands of hearty moth families!

To protect your clothes, blankets, furniture and rugs, you must rely on regular and frequent cleaning the year around -- on brushing, airing and sunning if possible.

Another reason why cleanliness is a protection is the moth's appetite. He prefers soiled clothes to clean clothes any time. A grease spot on a woolen skirt is a dainty morsel to a moth. He'll attack that spot first thing, before he

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touches the cleaner parts of the skirt. And haven't you noticed that moths settle first along the neckline of the fur collar, tempted by the little extra soil there? If you put wool socks away without washing, you'll find that the feet get the first damage. So keep your clothes clean if you want to discourage moths -- especially those clothes that you wear only occasionally. Never put slightly soiled clothes away for the summer. Be sure first that they're clean and have no moths or eggs hidden in them.

Keeping the clothes closet clean pays too. Moths often a hearty foothold in accumulations of dust or fluff on the floor or back in the corners of shelves. A window that lets in light and air discourages moths from your clothes.

Now about your upholstered furniture. When you see a little moth fluttering out as you plump up the cushions of your davenport, do you make one wild grab and then forget it? Or do you try to find where it hatched out and where it has probably left seven or twelve dozen younger brothers diligently chewing up your furniture? One of the favorite nesting places is deep in the hair stuffing of your upholstered chairs or lounges. The worst part of it all is that nine times out of ten you never know how badly moths are ruining your expensive furniture until the damage is done.

Manufacturers are now moth-proofing some of the hair or wool coverings on furniture. That's a point to remember when you buy new pieces. But in the meantime, there are the chairs we already have to look after. Regular cleaning with the upholstery tool of the vacuum cleaner or by thorough brushing certainly is one way to keep moths off. Remember to reach the back and underneath each time you clean.

But once moths penetrate the cover and get into the stuffing, then fumigation inside and out is the only way to deal with them. And this should be done at once. Two good fumigants to use against moths are paradichlorbenzine and naphthalene. These fumigants, if used in sufficient quantity, will kill both moths and eggs. But they don't make the cloth proof against further attacks. You can have fumigating done by a good exterminating company, or, you can do it yourself. But it isn't an easy job to do at home, for you have to loosen the covering enough to get plenty of fumigating crystals inside. Then you must cover the furniture tightly so that the gases given off by the crystals will be closely confined and can penetrate the innermost crevices and the darkest corners inside the stuffings. You can use sheets, blankets or a tight paper to cover your furniture during fumigation.

That's all about moths today. Later in the spring we'll have a talk about packing winter garments away for safety.

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